




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR HILL**

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## **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (3.47 pm): This is a very sad day for Queensland farmers and for rural and regional Queensland. I vehemently oppose these laws. This is quite disappointing, but it is in Labor's DNA to attack the farmers. In 1999, then member for Callide Jeff Seeney and I attended the rally to protest the Beattie government's vegetation laws, which removed the rights to freehold property.

In 2004, the then member for Callide again led the charge. For three days, he fought clause by clause to stop the broadscale land-clearing laws affecting freehold land. In 2006, the Labor government introduced the wild rivers legislation. While it was disappointing that those laws passed through the House, we must thank the Indigenous communities for having the laws overturned in the courts. That was a big fight and it was great to finally see a victory come our way in regard to draconian vegetation laws.

In 2010 the Bligh government introduced ERMPs, environmental risk management plans. This required landowners to fill out a form telling the department of natural resources where there were washouts on their properties and how they were going to fix them. If they did not fill out that form correctly there was a \$75,000 fine. The other insult was that if they did not fill out that form they could be jailed. This occurred at the time when the Bligh government privatised our railways and Forestry Plantations Queensland.

We were fortunate because after that finally Queensland had a reprieve. The Labor government was smashed at the next election and was reduced to seven seats in Queensland. That occurred as a result of two things—the animosity towards ERMPs and asset sales. The Newman government then came to power with 78 seats. They declared war on everybody. They introduced asset sales and their seats were reduced to 42 at the next election.

People are sick of this issue being a political football. They are after some certainty. The mother of all insults was when the last government reversed the onus of proof. In other words, landowners were guilty before being proven innocent. I believe it was the Law Society that said that not even terrorists are treated that badly. Not even our most hardened criminals are treated this badly.

It is disappointing that the Labor government would treat landowners with such disrespect. We are now debating the Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. The great thing is that we had a win when the vegetation management laws were defeated in 2016 with the support of KAP and a member of the crossbench whom we were able to convince to come our way and throw the bill out. That was probably one of the happiest days of our lives.

The good thing introduced by the Newman government was clearing for high-value agriculture and irrigated high-value agriculture. I believe that was a sensible move because so much land was tied up. Some 98 per cent of the Einasleigh Uplands, 98 per cent of Cape York and 98 per cent of the gulf plains was remnant. That was a good thing that the Newman government put in place. It finally allowed land to be freed up for development. It is rubbish to talk about destroying the Great Barrier Reef and the ozone layer; it is make-believe.

It is disappointing that the LNP has chosen to make political an important issue that will have an impact on farmers. They have come out and pointed the finger at KAP and blamed KAP for this problem. I listened to a number of LNP speakers say yesterday that we are the problem because we decided to give people the choice about where they allocated their preferences. They believe that we are the reason behind this. The LNP really needs to have a good look at itself because it was the LNP that preferenced Jackie Trad—the architect and mastermind of these vegetation management laws. She was the person in the driver's seat.

It was KAP that introduced a vegetation management bill last year that allowed for an appeal mechanism for rejected clearing applications. It also allowed for clearing for high-value grazing. The LNP voted with Labor to delay debate on that bill. They also voted with Labor to not give landowners category H licences. They also voted with Labor to toughen gun control laws introduced by Jackie Trad. They voted with Labor to block KAP's fair milk logo bill. If they want to say that we are the problem then they should look at the fact that they were reduced from 78 seats to 39. I believe the LNP has to have a good look at itself and ask itself whether it is a pathetic opposition.

As I mentioned before, the Einasleigh Uplands, the gulf plains and Cape York are 98 per cent remnant. The 2012-14 SLATS report clearly states that 296,000 hectares was cleared and there was 437,000 hectares of regrowth. That means that regrowth is outstripping land clearing. The government's figures estimate that vegetation regrowth far outstripped clearing in the three years. In fact, tree coverage increased in 51 of the 77 council areas across Queensland.

Land management is about sowing good seed and producing good crops. Landowners will clear vegetation but what we see are the bulldozers and not the end product, which is the seed sown, the sorghum grown, the fat cattle, kangaroos jumping through crops and the grasses that are holding the soil together and stopping erosion.

It is disappointing that, after all the committee hearings right across the state, not one change has been made to the legislation. Landowners travelled right across the state to appeal to the Labor government. Many of them were in tears and were pleading for help. They identified that this is going to impact severely on their businesses. Members of the Indigenous community indicated very strongly that they are in a position where they are ready to go, ready to develop and ready to create jobs for Indigenous people. They have been waiting for 20 or 30 years and they are finally at this point. These laws are going to put a stop to that.

I have a copy of a letter from a landowner that was sent to the Premier. The letter does not condemn or criticise; it comes from the heart. Sue Salmond from Lestree Downs states—

I am just a poor simple farmer dedicated totally 100% to what I do. My husband's family will be the paying guardians of the property which I have had the pleasure of spending the past 36 years with my husband on. Next year we hope to celebrate 100 years of family ownership on Lestree Downs. I turned 60 in March this year and have only spent 3 of those years in town ... My mother's family have been graziers for over 150 years, so I do believe I have the right to send this letter to you to ask you to Help us to continue to be your guardians of this land and to treasure and continue to farm the land we are bred to look after. Please think very seriously about working with us and not against us to find a workable out come for future and our families' futures.

I table this letter for the information of the House.

*Tabled paper:* Letter, dated 30 April 2018, from Ms Susan Salmond to the Premier and Minister for Trade, Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk, regarding vegetation management [597].